



DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary Bowen Launches Survey to Assess Needs of Voters with Disabilities

SACRAMENTO – As Californians prepare to vote in the June 5 Presidential Primary Election, California Secretary of State Debra Bowen launched the state's first online survey to help elections officials assess and address the needs of voters with disabilities.

“Voting is our most sacred right in a democracy and everyone should be able to exercise that right independently and privately,” said Secretary Bowen, the state's chief elections officer. “While California elections officials offer many resources to voters with disabilities, I want to know if these voters are aware of all the options and services available to them, as well as whether they are encountering unnecessary challenges when voting.”

The Secretary of State's office established the eight-member Statewide Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) in 2005 to provide guidance to elections officials serving voters with disabilities. Since then, the Secretary of State's office updated 10-year-old polling place accessibility guidelines and provided training to county elections staff on the federal and state requirements for accessible polling places, all in collaboration with the VAAC and the California Department of Rehabilitation. Now the Secretary of State is asking voters with disabilities to participate in a brief confidential survey available at www.surveymonkey.com/s/P8MW27Q through June 29. Survey results will help identify whether there is a need for more training, modified services, or enhanced outreach programs for voters with disabilities.

Following are key resources that are available to California voters with disabilities.

Large-Print and Audio Formats: Official ballots and the Secretary of State's Voter Information Guide are available in alternate formats for voters with visual disabilities. For more information about large-print or audio formats of ballots in a specific precinct, voters should contact their county elections offices or, at the polling place on Election Day, ask a poll worker for more information about using a special voting machine. To download the MP3 audio version or the large-print version of the Secretary of State's Voter Information Guide, go to <http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/alt-versions/>. The Secretary of State also takes phone orders for state voter guides, which are available in 10 languages (see below for phone numbers).

Polling Place Accessibility: State and federal laws require polling places to be physically accessible to voters with disabilities, and every person who works in a polling place on Election Day is there to ensure voters' rights are protected. In California, each polling place has at least

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one voting machine that allows voters, including those with disabilities, to cast a ballot without assistance. California law also permits up to two people of a voter's choice, excluding the voter's employer or union representative, to assist in marking the ballot. If a voter cannot come into the polling place, "curbside voting" is an option in which a poll worker carries a ballot outside the polling place to the voter.

Voting by Mail: Any California voter may vote in the comfort of home by asking to vote by mail. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot for the state primary election is May 29. A registered voter may request a ballot by using the application printed on the back of the sample ballot booklet (mailed to the voter by the county elections office) or the uniform application available at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-by-mail/pdf/fill-in-vote-by-mail-app-instruct.pdf.

English	(800) 345-VOTE (8683)
Spanish	(800) 232-VOTA (8682)
Chinese	(800) 339-2857
Hindi	(800) 345-2692
Japanese	(800) 339-2865
Korean	(866) 575-1558
Tagalog	(800) 339-2957
Thai	(855) 345-3933
Vietnamese	(800) 339-8163
TDD	(800) 833-8683

For more information on how voters with disabilities can vote privately and independently, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_dis.htm.

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